

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3108

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, RP
SUBJECT: MILITARY LIFTS CURFEW IN MINDANAO

1. SOUTHERN COMMAND CHIEF RADM ESPALDON ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 24 HE HAS ORDERED MIDNIGHT-TO-4:00 A.M. CURFEW LIFTED IN 13 PROVINCES OF WESTERN MINDANAO, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. HE SAID THE MOVE WAS RECOMMENDED BY MILITARY COMMANDERS OF REGIONS IX (ZAMBOANGA) AND XII (COTABATO) AND APPROVED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS BECAUSE THE PRESENT "POLICE ACTION" IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES HAS IMPROVED THE PEACE AND ORDER SITUATION IN THESE AREAS.

2. THE 13 AFFECTED PROVINCES, ACCORDING TO DAILY EXPRESS, ARE: ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE, BASILAN, TAWI-TAWI, SULU, MAGUINDANAO, SULTAN KUDARAT, SOUTH COTABATO, NORTH COTABATO, LANAQ DEL SUR, LANAQ DEL NORTE, DAVAL DEL SUR AND PALAWAN. (NOTE: THESE ARE THE 13 PROVINCES COVERED BY THE "AUTONOMY" AGREEMENT WITH THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT OF DECEMBER 1976) TIMES JOURNAL AND BULLETIN TODAY REPORT CURFEW WAS LIFTED "THROUGHOUT MINDANAO."

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3. ESPALDON CITED INCREASED TOURISM TO THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, PARTICULARLY TO ZAMBOANGA CITY, AS "THE BEST YARDSTICK OF NORMALCY" OF THE AREA. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO BE "MORE ALERT AND ACTIVE" TO GUARD AGAINST AN UPSURGE OF "CRIMINALITY." "I HOPE THE LIFTING OF CURFEW WILL

CONTINUE," HE SAID, "AND THAT NO UNTOWARD INCIDENT WILL WARRANT ITS REIMPOSITION."

4. COMMENT: PRESIDENT MARCOS ORDERED THE COUNTRYWIDE MARTIAL LAW CURFEW LIFTED LAST AUGUST AS A GESTURE TOWARD IMPROVING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. IT WAS RETAINED SELECTIVELY, HOWEVER, IN AREAS OF ACTIVE INSURGENCY IN MINDANAO AND ELSEWHERE. EMBOFFS WHO VISITED SOUTHERN AND WESTERN MINDANAO EARLIER THIS MONTH REPORTED THAT THE INSURGENCY SITUATION THERE IS AS BAD AS EVER (MANILA 2759). THE ONLY NEW ELEMENT IN THE SITUATION, SO FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, IS THE GOVERNMENT'S VIGOROUS CAMPAIGN FOR A STRONG SHOWING IN THE INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 7. THE LIFTING OF CURFEW IN THESE AREAS APPEARS TO BE A WELCOME RELAXATION OF AN ARBITRARY RULE ENFORCED IN SECURE AS WELL AS INSECURE AREAS OF THE SOUTH.

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